

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission**  
**215 Bay Street, Suite 5**  
**Easton, MD**  
**March 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Chairman, Ted Bautz; Vice Chairman, Geoff Oxnam; Debra Renshaw (filling the St Michaels seat vacated by Ann Borders), Walter Chase, Peter Dunbar, Susie Hayward, Haim Loran, Paul Makosky, and Len Wendowski

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Corey Pack, Timothy Jones, Shannon Dill, Erik Neil, Ph.D., and Terenda Thomas

**Members Excused:** John General and Gerry O'Mara

**Attendees:** Laura Heikes, Scott Warner and Rose Potter

**Guest Speakers:** Martin Sokolich, Long Range Planner, Talbot County Department of Planning and Zoning, reported on the draft of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, a land use plan that guides future development for the county. The Maryland Department of Planning requires updating the Comprehensive Plan every 7 to 10 years. Economic Development is included in the plan for direction in future development priorities to support the tax base of the county. The main chapters are the land use plan and natural resources plan. The Comprehensive Plan also includes agriculture, historic preservation, community services, community design and appearance. Economic Development/Tourism has a chart chapter, which has been substantially revised because of all the recent work accomplished since the last plan. The Sage Policy Group was very help in providing information through the recently completed Strategic Plan. Mr. Sokolich indicated that drafts of the plan were circulated to several committees, who reviewed the update from the 2005 plan, to ensure all the data was included and accurate. Mr. Sokolich then opened the meeting for questions and comments. A discussion ensued regarding the comprehensive plan.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Chairman Ted Bautz, in Conference Room 3, located at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Easton, MD 21601. A quorum was present.

**Agenda and Minutes:** The Agenda for the March 6<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting was approved without changes. The Minutes from the February 6<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting was approved, pending one correction, that Tim Jones be recognized as Ex Officio, for Dr. Viniar, as the Chesapeake College representative.

**Correspondence:** The Director reported that correspondence was sent to Alex Handy and MUST Transportation, thanking him for his presentation at the February EDC meeting. The director also forwarded a copy of the MUST report to the commission members. Once the director receives additional information regarding the transportation summit, scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup>, she will provide additional information.

**Old Business:** The Director reported on the Defense and Government Contactor's Reception which was held on February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Sotera Defense Solutions facility on Glebe Road. Sotera General

Manager, Mark Saverese welcomed the group of 24 attendees. According to a 2012 report on contract activity, Talbot County reported \$30 million in defense and government contractors' revenue for 58 projects. The County is interested in monitoring the activity of this sector to ensure they have resources to support their requirements. Discussions concerning the defense industry in Talbot County and potential for business retention and future attraction. The ED Commission came before the Talbot County Council for their Quarterly Update on February 25<sup>th</sup> at the regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Bautz was introduced as the Chair of the EDC and Mr. Loran attended on behalf of the newly formed Marketing Committee. The information was well received.

The Director provided a status update to the ED Commission on the Real Property Tax Credit proposal, approved by the EDC and submitted to the County Manager for consideration by the County Council. The County Manager and Finance Officer reviewed the proposed changes, and determined the recommendations were not in Talbot County's best interest due to the Real Property Revenue Tax Cap. A suggestion for the creation of Economic Development Fund was discussed.

The Talbot County Council announced the resignation of John Craig and the appointment of Clay Stamp as Interim County Manager. Jessica Morris will continue in her role as Assistant County Manager. A discussion ensued regarding tax credits and incentives. Bautz asked the ED Commission to think this matter through, as he and the director are ready to workshop with the Council. They already have a document for consideration, at the county manager's office, and they have been asked to come back and revise the content. The director suggested that the two committees review the document and matter first, then come back and report to commission. The director reminded everyone that there is an opportunity to work on these two committees or the workforce committee. Councilman Pack reported that the County Council is determining the FY15 budget with estimates of a \$72 million budget and \$79 million worth of requests from county departments. The County Council certainly welcomes any input and suggestions, from the commission, for the business incentive project. The council looks forward to further discussion. In the next couple of weeks, council will be in the process of working on the budgets. Mr. Pack indicated he plans to attend the Business Appreciation and Awards Breakfast on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Pack reported that he had a great time at the Defense and Government Contractor's Reception and he thought the reception was well received. The relationships built around that table will be long lasting and he hopes the ED Commission will continue their work with the contractors. The County Council is supportive of the ED Commission and supports efforts to stimulate growth, attract new businesses and retain our current business base.

The Director confirmed with Mr. Bautz whether a motion is needed to set up a criterion for the incentive fund and request a work session. Ms. Hayward motioned, and Haim Loran seconded. The motion carried to set up workshop. .

**Old business continued:** the Director reported that the Open Meetings Act training is available online through the following link: [http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class\\_oma\\_intro1.php](http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class_oma_intro1.php). Additional information about the Open Meetings Act is available on the Attorney General's website: <http://www.oag.state.md.us/Opengov/Openmeetings/>. The training is highly recommended to the EDC, as a board, on behalf of government business, to be familiar with the very specific rules of conduct.

The Business Appreciation and Awards Breakfast is scheduled on April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Milestone. Jason Broadwater, CEO, Revenflo and author of “Old Towns, New World” will be the Keynote discussing internet technology, the millennium generation, as well as the impact to small towns and the future. The Breakfast Business Awards for FY 14 will be recognized at the breakfast for Innovation, Investment and Expansion. Four sponsors are contributing to the program: Easton Airport, Chesapeake Utilities Corporation, M&T Bank and CBIZ. The deadline to respond is March 14<sup>th</sup>. A sponsor kit was prepared and sent out to prospects. The cost of the breakfast is \$25.00. Last year 125 people attended the Business Appreciation Breakfast. This year the event has been moved to the Millstone to accommodate increased participation. **New Business:** The Director provided nominations for the Business Appreciation Breakfast and requested that the information remain confidential until a final decision is made. The nominations from each of the towns are subject to their discussion and approval. The final list will be reviewed the April 3<sup>rd</sup> ED Commission meeting. Mr. Bautz motioned to accept these nominations, pending approval from the towns and commissioners. Mr. Loran seconded. The motion carried.

The Director shared the EDO Budget proposal for FY 15, an outline of strategic goals and marketing objectives with funding requirements. A list of accomplishments for the previous budget year was reviewed, including the reinstatement of the EDO Budget to the 2010 funding levels. The marketing plan was the largest line item increase requested, at \$100,000. The marketing plan outlined the criteria for developing a brand and developing marketing materials. Additional requests included part-time consulting work to support business retention and the marketing efforts. A discussion ensued. **Ted Bautz, Chairman, reported on Business Environment Committee:** The committee met on Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 at the County Offices and reviewed a checklist put together by Site Selector Magazine. Don Richardson, from the Town of Easton and Sandy Coyman, from Talbot County, are working on process improvements regarding permits and regulations. Mr. Coyman is working within the expansion of Munis System to provide for transparency and efficiency. The Town of Easton has a similar goal. Mr. Wendowski indicated that he would like to have a flow chart, demonstrating the status of permits from beginning to end, as well as the checks and balances. Mr. Bautz indicated that both department heads are moving towards a best in class model, which is an online transparent tracking system. Mr. Oxnam reported that other agencies use what they call a Concierge model, or Sherpa. When a business requests a permit, there is a concierge that walks you through the process so that person is accountable from beginning to end, working with the customer to make sure all the steps are followed through. The Business Environment Committee meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 9:30 am. **Haim Loran, Chair, Marketing Committee:** reported that the committee was interested in identifying a list of those companies who are considering expansion or moving as a possible base to develop leads. Mr. Loran spoke with the editor of Site Selection and they do not identify which businesses want to move but did have information about industry sectors. Scott Beatty is preparing a spreadsheet of incentives that are offered by other counties to illustrate how Talbot County might structure incentives. Haim commented that Talbot County should to be very selective about the sectors we want to attract, as we do not want to upset our environment. Mr. Loran proposes that we can produce a brochure for little or no cost, by selling advertising space. There should be cooperation, rather than duplication, and Mr. Loran requested a meeting with the newly formed Easton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) but the meeting had to be postponed due to

the weather. When the meeting is rescheduled, Mr. Loran will propose to send someone Ex-Officio to our ED Commission meeting and Mr. Loran would like to attend the EEDC meeting in that capacity. The Marketing Committee meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 9:30 am. Mr. Wendowski indicated that the EEDC is in the market for an Executive Director. **Len Wendowski, Town of Easton:** reported that the St. Patrick's Day Parade is at 4:30 p.m. on the 17<sup>th</sup>. The Town Council is in the middle of budgets; going to consensus on Harris Teeter, going to consensus on the impact fees; they have not had any communication from the hospital, and if there is, it has not filtered down to the Town Council level. Dick's Sporting Goods is working on some things that they have through their staff. **Walter Chase, Town of Trappe:** reported they have not heard from the Lakeside developer lately. Trappe Commission met March 5<sup>th</sup> and announced the hiring of Town Clerk, Erin Braband, who was sworn in. The town presented their 2013-2014 supplemental budget for adoption. Trappe has not lost any downtown businesses. Several water treatment pumps have been identified for replacement and will need to be installed in the pumping station. **Jeff Oxnam, Vice Chair and Utilities:** reported internet service continues to grow with local businesses, and especially the telephone service, since it is a more cost effective solution than some of the high-end phone systems. We had record cold temperatures this winter, so residential and business invoices are reflecting the higher amount in utility bills. Junior Achievements reported they were on track to teach over 800 students in the Talbot county School system for financial literacy, free of charge, in the classrooms. The Dodge Ball Tournament Fundraiser netted over \$10,000 towards their efforts. **Shannon Dill, Agriculture UME:** reported spring is ahead. According to the state regulations, March 1<sup>st</sup> is when farmers may begin to spread manure but there are many other environmental factors to keep in mind like weather and this year nobody is spreading manure because the ground is too wet and some grounds are still frozen. Agriculture education workshops are wrapping up for the region with great participation. Each year farmers have to attend recertification training. There is an organic meeting, Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, for field crops and vegetable production at the Chesapeake College. The Farm Bureau Social is at the Easton High School on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. The speaker is Josh McGrath, University of Maryland's nutrient specialist and the researcher for the Phosphorous Management Tool. He is leaving UM and moving to Kentucky. The Easton High School Culinary Arts program provides the food. The cost is \$10.00. **Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford:** reported that the town of Oxford is taking public comments regarding the storm water fund to support upgrades to the existing system. The Town of Oxford is not eligible for the state grants to support storm water management. Oxford is attempting to establish its own resources and there are serious issues to consider. The County took deed to about 80 acres of property as open space behind Fire Hall at the entrance to Oxford which will become a passive recreation area. The County action is part of the mitigation for the hospital land and the County has been working very closely with the Town of Oxford. There will be an RFP issued, in early March. It will be an RFP/RFQ combination relative to design services, both from engineering and land use, so we may put together a detailed plan and bring it back to The Land Conservancy, who is advising on this project. **Debbie Renshaw, Town of St. Michaels:** reported that the Commissioners started their FY 15 budget process. They met with the Planning Commission to begin the process for their Comprehensive Plan update. One of the positive things from that meeting was that the Commissioners asked the Planning Committee to prioritize what they saw as incentive for retaining businesses and bringing new businesses into St Michaels. They discussed doing a five-year plan to make improvements to the town that would benefit any

businesses coming in and suggested a grant writer that would secure funds for infrastructure projects. St Michaels has a large amount of vacant storefronts as many of the businesses are not owned by the operators. Many retail storeowners cannot sustain businesses throughout the year for a seasonal business model in the tourist town. Accordingly, the Commission is interested in attracting other types of businesses to St Michaels. Ms. Renshaw indicated that small business spinoffs, where people work from their homes, are likely. St Michaels has one large parcel on the market; it is Dirty Dan's property, as you are coming into town. One of St Michaels' big delays in the permitting process is the state forest conservation, so the town is going to be addressing the requirements of that program in order to get projects through the pipeline faster. Because the majority of the town is in the critical areas, they may be able to adopt the critical area mitigation criteria, instead of the states criteria. **Susie Hayward, Real Estate:** reported the residential market is still bouncing around due to uncertainties in the markets. January has the real life figures; January 2014 is better than January 2013. Ms. Hayward indicated that the buyers are not finding what they are looking for, despite a high inventory, and a lot of the housing stock currently on the market is either not sellable or priced too high. February's estimates follows:

<b>February 2014 Estimate</b>		
<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>Listings</u></b>	<b><u>Sold</u></b>
<b>Talbot</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Easton</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>St Michaels</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Trappe</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Tilghman</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>

Ms. Hayward indicated that they are seeing many renters shifting into first homebuyers. The lower end is comparable to the rentals, which may cause rental prices to start going up. **Paul Makosky, Member at Large:** reported that he would be available to work with a committee to raise the tax cap, provided that a good case is developed, with the understanding and support from the Council that we would be doing this. The plan would have to be well defined, well publicized and quantified. **Rose Potter, Trappe:** reported that the Town of Trappe is in the process of developing a plot of land that was released in 2013, through the Open Space program. Trappe is trying to development that land into a passive park. They have two concept plans to bring to the planning commission in the near future. **Scott Warner, Mid-Shore Regional Council:** reported that with everything that the commission has discussed, it is clear that the Director needs a full staff in order to sell all the things Talbot County has to offer.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission meetings are held at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. The next Economic Development Commission meeting will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD.**

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST Bus) [www.mustbus.org](http://www.mustbus.org)

#### Revised Impact Fee Study

A public meeting was held in the Council Chambers on January 21st, 2014 to discuss revisions to the Impact Fee Study. Please click here for a copy of the revised document.

<http://www.town-eastonmd.com/TempMedia/Impact%20Fee%20Study%2021Jan14.pdf>

Aday Remus: Jason Broadwater's Development Tool: <https://adayremus.com>

To view the Proposal to Amend Nutrient Management Regulations, along with the Extension Bulletin to be incorporated by reference in the Maryland Nutrient Management Manual:

<http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Proposed-Regulations.aspx>.

A fact sheet "AgBrief: Phosphorous Management Tool - An Overview of the Proposed Regulations" is also available online at:

[http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag\\_brief/AgBrief\\_PMT\\_092013.pdf](http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag_brief/AgBrief_PMT_092013.pdf)

The Maryland Workforce Exchange and labor market information are available online at

<https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.